

## Weight loss medications: what you don't know may hurt your patient

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### Abstract

According to the World Health Organization, around 2 billion adults are overweight. Of those, 650 million are considered to be affected by obesity (BMI>30 kg/m). The worldwide prevalence of obesity nearly tripled between 1975 and 2016. If current trends continue, it is estimated that over 1 billion will be affected by obesity by 2025. Until recently, obesity was considered a lifestyle problem by society and most medical practitioners. Even though the WHO classified obesity as a disease in 1948, it's not until 2013 that the American Medical Association classified obesity as a disease. Medications for chronic obesity management have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) during the past few years. In randomized, placebo-controlled trials, use of these agents resulted in weight loss of approximately 5%-10% of original weight. They are approved for individuals with a body mass index (BMI) >30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> or > 27 kg/m<sup>2</sup> with at least one serious comorbidity. Notwithstanding the efficacy of 5-10% weight loss, fewer than 2% of obese individuals in the USA are offered and fill a prescription of one of these medications. Several reasons have been cited for this seeming reluctance on the part of physicians to prescribe medications that work and are safe. Some reasons cited are public perception of obesity as a matter of will power rather than a disease. Other barriers to the care of patients with obesity are lack of time on the part of the clinician and stigma. Last, physicians are inadequately trained in obesity medicine.

**Conclusion:** Stigma, time restraints and poor obesity training are keeping physicians from properly treating patients with weight loss medications that are safe and effective.



### Biography:

Dr. Salas Whalen is a triple board-certified endocrinologist located on the upper east side of Manhattan. She is guided by the philosophy that every patient is different and requires personalized care and attention. Salas Whalen believes in the power of patient knowledge in driving outcomes and promoting lifelong health. Her practice is based on achieving results through teamwork between physician and patient.



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